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Mariner's Superstitions.

STRANGE BELIEFS HELD BY SAILORS.

Mariners of all nationalities cherish very much the same superstitions. Their joys and fears are the same in all waters and have found similar expression from Nova Scotia to China. It has been pointed out that since the days of the Phoenicians, the greatest of sailors in ancient times, seamen have ever been a "temperamental lot," whose belief in omens and signs has been more or less incomprehensible to the landman.

The ancient mariners held the wildest superstitions, but their belief in the existence of enchanted spots, such as the siren island of Calypso or of those islands that Sinbad likened to the Gardens of Paradise, was much more picturesque and romantic than the superstitions of the modern seaman.

The latter is filled with foreboding by the sight of a hatch cover upside down or by the falling overboard of a shrapnel. He stands against the accidental tearing of a flag, and he is certain that if sails be sewed or mended on the quarterdeck ill luck will ensue. Events are always viewed by him in the light of what has gone before. Everything that is inconvenient or vexatious he ascribes to some malign influence.

The sailor is a firm believer in the efficacy of odd numbers, as naval captes testify—minute-guns excepted. Women at sea, to say nothing of preachers, he regards with disfavor, and certain officers will bear a bad reputation for the weather they bring. Certain days, the seaman is convinced, are unlucky. One old chronicler puts the number of days upon which it is undesirable to put to sea at fifty-three, but the number has been considerably reduced since his time. Among these days were the anniversaries of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the suicide of Judas.

The fact that Columbus began his first voyage on a Friday and that he discovered land on the fifth day of the week have no weight with the sailor—the day remains unlucky.

Everybody is familiar with the old superstitions of sailors that, to bring a favorable breeze, they must whistle during the calm.

THE LUCK OF THE BROOM.

From the remotest times there seems to have prevailed a belief that brooms or magic would placate the storm spirits and induce them to permit the vessel to proceed unimpeded on its course. Russian sailors have been known to pour oil and water over a rocky promontory in order to obtain a wind favorable to their designs.

French sailors believe that certain of their shipmates are able to con-

trol the winds by virtue of a ring worn on the fourth finger of the right hand. This power, however, carries with it distinct disadvantages, since if the possessor remains ashore for more than three days, or if any single voyage of his extends beyond a period of three months, his life is forfeit.

A broom is thought to exert considerable influence upon the wind. There is a Dutch tradition that, if wind-bound, a vessel is passed by another craft, and a broom is thrown in the latter's course the luck of the first vessel will change. It has been pointed out that in this relation the broom which Van Tromp lashed to his mast as a symbol of his power to sweep the seas of the British possessed a very different significance in the eyes of his men. They probably regarded it as capable of bringing winds favorable to their admiral's design to get at Charles II's ships.

A star-dogged moon was thought to portend a storm; while if the moon rose in a storm she would soon "eat up the clouds." Many an anxious mariner found comfort in this belief.

The ghostly lights at St. Elmo, which appear at the masthead or in the rigging immediately preceding a storm, date back to the voyage of the Argonauts. If these marine will-o'-the-wisps remain stationary or ascend, Dana tells us, they are good omens, but if they descend then foul weather will surely follow. How they came by the name of "St. Elmo's Lights" is not known, although conjecture has it that St. Elmo was St. Erasmus, who in early art is always shown as carrying a candle.

JONAH'S AND CATS.

Among the very curious superstitions of modern sailors may be mentioned the following:

Captain, cook or cabin boy considers it unlucky to ship with a man who has neglected to pay his laundry bill. A sailor, nearing port after a lengthy voyage, will gather up old clothes and shoes unfit for further use and ceremoniously commit them to the sea, in order to insure himself luck on his next voyage.

Sailors like to ship on a craft that displays a shark's tail firmly nailed to the bowsprit or jibboom.

Jack Tar places great faith in the merits of a pig as a weather prophet. During very rough weather it is difficult to convince any old-timer that there is not a Jonah on board. Many captains of the old school, who ought to know better, are so superstitious in this regard that it is not uncommon for them to evince an intense dislike for officers who have happened apparently to be the harbingers of bad weather, especially fog. It is quite usual on board ship to find members of the crew nicknamed "Foggy Jones," "Heavy Weather Bill" or "Squally Jack."

Cats on board ship are held to be lucky, and many a stray feline finds a comfortable home and careful attention with Jack for its friend, although, on the other hand, our domestic friend has at times been held responsible for the continuance of very bad weather and forced to accept the role of Jonah to the fullest extent.

ANCIENT MARINERS.

One of the most curious of the superstitions of the sea is that pertaining to the capture of a shark. The natural dread and antipathy with which these monsters of the deep are viewed cause a capture to be hailed with much rejoicing. All hands, from the captain down to the cabin boy, take a keen interest in the proceedings, and, having successfully landed the shark on deck—an operation involving no little excitement—it is killed and its tail cut off. This trophy is then nailed either on the end of the bowsprit or the jibboom and is considered an infallible charm, capable of bringing the craft the fairest of winds and weather. It is not uncommon to observe sailing ships lying in port with this peculiar emblem of the sailor's superstition, but the custom is fast dying out, since, in the case of steamers, a shark capture at sea is a very rare occurrence.

Another remarkable and weird superstition is that pertaining to the albatross. These huge birds, measuring from fourteen to eighteen feet tip to tip of their wings, are to be seen only in the stormy regions of the capes of Good Hope and Horn and the surrounding latitudes. The peculiar belief of old sailors credits these birds with possessing the souls of ancient mariners, who, for their sins, must have been doomed to scour these stormy seas for all eternity.

During calm weather these birds are easily captured by a contrivance of the sailors' own invention. This, being baited, attaches itself to the hook bill of the albatross when the bird attempts to swallow the bait; and the creature is then hauled on board. Few captains will permit crews to kill these birds, since they hold out the killing is certain to entail disaster to the ship.

PORCINE BAROMETERS.

The killing of a pig at sea is always an occasion of great moment, not only for the reason that fresh meat is to be enjoyed—a great luxury on a sailing vessel after perhaps months of salt provisions—but also because what is termed a "pig breeze," for a certainty. Pigs when kept on sailing ships are allowed very frequently to leave their pens, and their movements on such occasions, which are held to foretell the wind to be expected, are watched with the keenest interest. Should a pig evince any signs of lassitude, lying down or wandering aimlessly about the decks, then this is a sign that calm weather will come, with little or no wind in prospect. Should, however, the pig show a frisky mood, with much squealing, then it is a sure sign of "big winds," a very necessary factor in the navigation of a sailing ship.

Of the many superstitions and legends having to do with phantom ships, none is more widely told than that of the "Flying Dutchman," or phantom ship of Vanderdecken. How the legend originated no one knows, but it has been ascertained that there was a seaman of repute who many years ago sailed from Holland to the east via the Cape of Good Hope, but was never heard of again.

A Modern Solomon.

All the Solomons are not dead. He was a magistrate who was used to dealing with negro boys. Two boys were brought up for stealing. Evidently one was guilty, but it was hard to tell which one. The magistrate placed them in separate cells, gave each one a leather string of equal length. "Now, boys, the string in the hands of the thief will grow," he said.

In two hours the boys were brought out. One showed his string; it had not been touched. The other had cut two inches off his string. "You are the thief," said the judge, and he was.



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Roumania is Now a Power.

The war has humbled some great nations and exalted several small ones. Chief among the latter is Roumania. Only to those who have studied the peace terms carefully have the facts with reference to this Balkan power been apparent. Roumania has benefited largely, as Frank H. Simonds points out in the Review of Reviews.

The truth is, of course, that Roumania is neither a little state nor is she acting off her own bat. As a consequence of the changes in her frontiers, incident to Austro-Hungarian defeat and Russian collapse, Roumania has become a nation with an area as great as Italy, with a population to-day of 16,000,000, living on a territory capable of sustaining a much larger population than Italy, and her population is increasing with great rapidity. In less than half a century, therefore, Roumania will, in all human probability, be a great power. Moreover she must be reckoned with henceforth as a very potent factor in all combinations that may be made.

She has an excellent army, organized by the French General Staff, battle-trained, an army which despite opening disasters due to Russian treachery and later surrender due to Russian collapse, displayed admirable courage and skill and remains one of the considerable military forces in Europe, actually taking rank after the armies of the five great powers.

In addition, by her position Roumania controls the Lower Danube, and, as recent events have shown, Hungary is completely at her mercy. What I am trying to make clear is that Roumania is herself henceforth a nation whose military and economic resources, whose army, whose grain, whose oil, whose minerals, give her a position quite unlike that which she occupied when she was only the largest of the minor Balkan states. Actually she is greater to-day and infinitely more powerful than were all the Balkan states together at the outbreak of war.

Bluenose Sailormen True to Form.

Unless reports from New England are exaggerated, descendants of the enterprising Nova Scotia sailormen who proved so skilful as blockade runners for the South during the American Civil War, are emulating the courses of their fathers. From Bath, Maine, comes the story of a Canadian schooner which crept up the local river on December evening, and whose most valuable freight consisted of a sugar hoghead containing many bottles of whiskey. At three points along shore it stopped, and at each the contents of the barrel were considerably lightened, by persons expecting the visit. One unfortunate consignee had the bad luck to attract the attention of the local sheriff; but prior to the discovery the schooner had embarked again on the waters of the broad Atlantic and was lying off the coast beyond the three-mile limit, where her crew could laugh at pursuit.

The history of the Atlantic seaboard shows that breaking through embargoes of any kind is meat and drink to the Bluenose sailormen. Whether it was Jefferson's non-intercourse laws, or the closing of Southern ports to trade in the 'sixties, or the modern liquor enactments of the United States, running the blockade is second nature with him. In the Napoleonic wars he was a privateer, and the Spanish main; and his earliest forebears gave the pirates of the tropic waters many a taste. Smuggling arouses no reprobaton in his mind. It was supposed that the romance of seafaring was dead for him; but Federal prohibition in the United States has revived the zest of life for him. From the Caribbean to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, beating the rules has been the poetry

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Why Do They Call Them Wisdom Teeth?

The wisdom teeth are the two last molar teeth to grow. They come one on each side of the jaw and arrive somewhere between the ages of twenty and twenty-five years. The name is given them because it is supposed that when a person has developed physically and mentally to the point where he has secured these last two teeth, he has also arrived at the age of discretion. It does not necessarily mean that one who has cut his wisdom teeth is wise, but that having lived long enough to grow these, which complete the full set of teeth, the person has passed sufficient actual years that, if he has done what he should to fit himself for life, he should have come by that time at the age of discretion or wisdom. As a

matter of fact these teeth grow at about the same age in people whether they are wise or not.

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